

MEMORANDUM FOR: Mr. Bruce Johnson
Chairman, Fine Arts Commission

Attached is a copy of the proposed employee bulletin on the Morris Louis paintings. This has been sent forward for DDA approval and should be published shortly.

Am forwarding this copy to you per your request to me on 12 August.



Date 13 August 1982

FORM 5-75 101 USE PREVIOUS EDITIONS

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EMPLOYEE BULLETIN

EB No. 961

Not yet published
Published August 1982

INSTALLATION OF PAINTINGS IN MAIN CONCOURSE, HEADQUARTERS BUILDING

1. Two paintings by Morris Louis, Spreading, 1954, and Gamma, 1960, have been added to the art works on loan to CIA from the Vincent Melzac Collection. They are hanging in the C and D corridors of the first floor of Headquarters Building.

2. Morris Louis, one of the best-known painters of the Washington Color School, was born in 1912 in Baltimore, Maryland, where he attended the Maryland Institute of Art. He lived in New York City in the late 1930's and served on the Federal Art Project. In 1947, he moved to Washington, D.C., where he taught classes in painting at the Washington Workshop Center of the Arts and later worked as an instructor at Howard University. In 1953, he held his first one-man show at the Workshop Center Art Gallery and thereafter, until his death in 1962, had exhibits at a number of galleries in Europe and in New York. Since his death, his works have been displayed at numerous exhibitions around the world, including the Guggenheim Museum and the National Gallery of Art. Many museums have his paintings in their permanent collections, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Whitney Museum of American Art, Harvard University's Fogg Art Museum, the Hirshhorn Museum, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Museum of Fine Art in Boston, and the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

3. The Washington Color School emphasized color as both subject matter and expressive content. Morris Louis was influenced by two other American artists, Jackson Pollock and Helen Frankenthaler, and it was the exposure to their work that helped him to become one of the supreme masters of color. He is identified as an abstract expressionist and is considered one of the major American painters of the 1950's.

4. Morris Louis' work breaks down into three groups: Veils and Florals, Unfurleds, and Stripes. Because he painted in complete privacy, there is no eyewitness account of how he worked. Art critics believe that the Veils were made chiefly by pouring thinned magna, or acrylic paint, onto a length of canvas which he had partly stapled to a type of scaffolding. He apparently controlled the flow of pigment across

the surface by tilting the scaffolding and manipulating the canvas. The Veils are considered extremely powerful and original in image and colors.

5. The paintings on loan to the Agency are two of his Veils, both acrylic on canvas. The earlier work, Spreading, is a visionary - work reminiscent of Jackson Pollock's drip paintings. The later painting, Gamma, is markedly different with a unifying darkish pigment that seems to underlie the painting, resulting in bronzed autumnal tones rather than the greyed twilight pastels of the early Veils.

6. To protect these valuable paintings, it was necessary to have them encased in plexiglass. Unfortunately, for technical reasons nonglare glass could not be used. Reflections may interfere somewhat with the viewer's enjoyment of the works, but even behind glass these paintings are important additions to the collection on display in the corridors.

FOR APPROVAL TO PUBLISH:

Harry E. Fitzwater
Deputy Director
for
Administration

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